Boats and fishermen captured by Pakistan

246. SHRI LEKHRAJ BACHANI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of boats and Indian fishermen captured by Pakistan Marine Security Agency;

(b) the period during which these fishermen were captured; and

(c) what action has been taken by Government to get these fishermen released?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI VINOD KHANNA): (a) and (b) As per available information there are 416 Indian fishermen and 68 boats currently in custody in Pakistan. These fishermen and boats were apprehended by Pakistan Maritime Security Agency since January 2002.

(c) Government have consistently taken up the issue of their release and repatriation through diplomatic channels. As a result, consular access to 281 fishermen has been provided so far. Pakistan, however, is yet to take necessary action for their release.

Trilateral meeting between India, Iran and Afghanistan

247. SHRIMATI VANGA GEETHA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether a trilateral meeting between India, Iran and Afghanistan was held in first week of January, 2003 to discuss alternative transit route to Afghanistan; and

(b) if so, the decisions arrived at the meeting?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI VINOD KHANNA): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir, A trilateral meeting between India, Iran and Afghanistan was held on 4 and 5 January, 2003 at Tehran to discuss the development of transit and transport between the three countries, elimination of barriers and constraints and providing safe, smooth, rapid and low-cost transportation. At the end of the meeting, a Memorandum of Understanding on the Development and Construction of Transit and Transport Infrastructures in Chabahar-Milak-Zaranj-Delaram

route was signed between the three countries aimed at improving access to Afghanistan, and upgrading the infrastructure at Chabahar port and relevant road segments.

Indo-US talks on Missile Defence Plan

248. SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether US Principal Deputy Secretary of Defence held talks with senior officials of his Ministry and informed about U.S. Missile Defence Plans in New Delhi in January, 2003;

(b) if so, whether U.S. has held such talks with other countries also;

(c) if so, the names of the countries; and

(d) India's response in this talk?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) Yes.

(b, and (c) U.S. has held talks with its allies as well as Russia and China on the question of missile defence.

(d) The talks in New Delhi focussed on missile defence issues, contribution of missile defence to security and stability, and the latest developments in U.S. missile defence policies and programmes. Both sides agreed to further continue such exchanges.

Visit of Iranian President

249. SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH:
SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether President of Iran visited India during the last week of January;

(b) if so, the subjects discussed during his visit and the details of the agreements reached between the two countries; and

(c) whether any follow-up action has initiated on any of these matters?